

Ocean Park Community Association Special Opals Edition

November 2002



Ocean Park Area Livability Study OPALS-for a gem of a community

The following is a condensed version of the report that was presented to Surrey City Council on November 4, 2002. A copy of the complete report, including tabulation of the results, is available at the Ocean Park Library.

The Ocean Park Community Association started the OPALS Project in July 2001, initially spurred by a review of the Surrey OCP and as a way to become proactive in its dealings with the city of Surrey.

Growth tends to occur through individual developer initiatives: how do we monitor the overall impact of growth on the 'livability' of a community?

Our survey was designed to elicit information on some of the many components of community living: availability for goods and services and a quality of life that makes a location reasonably self sufficient in physical and social needs and suitable for long term residence.

We needed to know what the residents thought about the living in this area: for our own community building initiatives program and also, we think, to assist the City of Surrey Council and Planning department in understanding issues that might need to be addressed in this community. We wanted hard facts on which to plan actions.

A team of volunteers set to work. It was decided that a survey with many open-ended questions would give us the most spontaneous responses. We studied the Official Community Plan and the Smart Growth BC manual to help us to plan the questions. Surveys were printed and mailed to +/- 5200 households that were in the V4A postal code. The City supported the OPCA with a grant that helped defray the costs of printing and mailing the surveys. A second team of volunteers took on coding and tabulating the responses on the 519 surveys returned (about 10%). The survey captured a sense of community life through the eyes, ears and experiences of local residents. We therefore have gathered extremely valuable information.

This report is on the initial findings.

Shirley Stonier
Coordinator, OPALS Steering Committee

What makes Ocean Park a livable community?

A small town atmosphere
The natural environment with big trees and green space
The location for its weather and proximity to beaches
The variety of owner-operated businesses in the village.
93% of respondents ranked livability as Good

What are the detractions?

Here we begin to see the issues that will need to be addressed

1. Increased traffic, speeding traffic, and unsafe crosswalks
2. Increased population density with loss of green space
3. Hooligan teens, vandalism, graffiti and crime with no police presence.

Our teens have no safe place to congregate or have recreation facilities close to home – summer nights and weekends are particularly noisy and sometimes frightening when some of our young people get to 'carousing'.

We surveyed the use of goods and services of businesses in the village. This gives us information that helps our definition of livability, but also will help the Ocean Park Business Association in its planning. We will provide you with these details later. 39% would not expand the shopping centre. If that was necessary, the first choice was to expand upwards not spread out. A theme was not considered too important – country/rustic/craftsman theme being the most mentioned.

Parking in the village was considered adequate by 72% of respondents.

62% of people want traffic calming methods used in the village – Pedestrian lights and a 30k speed zone being 1st and 2nd choices. Key intersections for traffic calming are: 128/16, 129/16, and 128/17.

We asked about resident's sense of safety – 85% feel safe but we also found out the reasons why people do not feel safe:

- No sidewalks or pathways or poorly maintained ones
- Speeding traffic and discourteous drivers
- Not feeling safe after dark, or when bicycling on the roads
- Need for more street lighting

We were given specific locations for upgrading and adding sidewalks – 128 being most often mentioned. Many other areas have no sidewalks at all, which combined with lack of lighting, led some drivers to complain they cannot see pedestrians.

27% of people commenting on how to improve a sense of safety said there should be more police patrols, better lighting, slower traffic, better crosswalks, and control of poor teen behaviour.

64% stated that Fire and Police services were adequate but further probing found that 129/249 making comments

(52%) complained about lack of police presence and slow response time. The fire department was deemed adequate but several people thought it is time to have the department fully staffed all the time with paid firefighters now that the area has grown.

84% want road ends kept for public use – with some regulations: dawn to dusk use only, parking regulated, gated, underbrush and garbage cleared and designated and treated at Surrey City parks. Many have wonderful views.

48% want open spaces preserved – including present parks and treed areas; the land beside the library for public use; and Camp Kwomais to be kept as a community resource. Some private lands were also identified as needed to be kept open -130/15; 128/17; 128/20; 136/16.

For planning purposes we checked thoughts on residential matters. If redevelopment or new development is needed , respondents chose in order of preference: 1. single family homes on 60x120 lots, 2. senior's housing, 3. single family homes 30x 100 lots, 4. town-houses and 5. single family homes on 100x150 lots.

Height, house size, lot size and view protection are important design considerations.

Secondary suites are acceptable to 60% of residents, with the following regulations: there is adequate parking, the homes are owner occupied, that owners pay for extra services, that they are licensed.

Recommended Recreational/leisure services for Ocean Park: 66% answered this section. For the general population: A community/recreation centre/gym rated 24% of votes. 9% stated there were enough on the peninsula. A Senior's centre, a pool or water park were also mentioned – and a larger library.

Needed for high school students, a teen centre or a community centre for all ages, outdoor sports facilities and an expanded library. Most often listed for families was a community centre, playgrounds, more children's programming, medical services and day care.

Seniors - 67 % filling in this section want a senior's centre and better library services. It was also found that better, more flexible transportation is needed for seniors. (In our question about use of transit services in general, non-seniors mostly did not use it but thought it a good idea for seniors and teens and for themselves as they aged.)

The public land next to the library was the most favoured location for a community centre/expanded library. Other sites included the OP Hall site and Camp Kwomais.

In summary:

The respondents like living in Ocean Park and don't want it to change too much. But there are some issues that need to be addressed:

- increased growth has brought increased traffic and increased speeding
- unsafe crosswalks and unsafe or absent sidewalks
- the poor behaviour of some of our teens/young adults
- not having enough police in the area to make us feel safe from criminal behaviour

It is important to state that the initial results of this survey are simply a starting point. We expect to set up Task Forces soon to begin dealing with these concerns, involving more residents and ultimately working with Surrey City staff to make recommendations and changes. We have suggested to Council that as we set up these Task Forces to research these issues in more detail, we will expect to be able to ask for help and advice from the various City Hall Departments and possibly also apply for further grants to assist us towards our goals.

If you are interested in these issues and would like to get involved, please call the OPCA at 604-538-2460. Better yet, come out to the next General Meeting (and Holiday Social) of the OPCA, scheduled for 7:30pm on Tuesday, December 10th, 2002. There will be a great need for volunteers to help with this project. Once again, we are just getting started and would like to get as many of our residents involved with this as possible.

THANK YOU OPALS VOLUNTEERS!

The OPCA Executive, on behalf of the Association membership would like to thank the OPALS committee members for the many, many, many hours of work that have gone towards this project. Your efforts are truly appreciated!

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